

Pointers For Parents

Children Get More Active Through VERB

(NAPSA)—A federal program teaching America's children about the benefits of physical activity is showing surprisingly good results.

The VERB program, run by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, targets “tweens” (children ages 9 to 13). The program speaks to tweens in a variety of “cool” ways—through a multi-media campaign of television advertisements and Web-based contests, through partnerships with major sports leagues and sports retailers, and through activities in schools, at amusement parks and at community-based organizations.

Tweens discover their favorite physical activity (or “VERB”) when they try different activities at VERB-sponsored events in their communities—from running to dancing to skateboarding. The tweens then record what they do—and for how long—on My VERB Recorder at www.VERBnow.com.

In its first year, the program witnessed a 34 percent rise in what's known as “free-time physical activity levels” among 9- to 10-year-olds, a 27 percent rise among 9- to 13-year-old girls, and a 25 percent rise among lower-middle income kids. Increases occurred across racial and ethnic groups.

The need for more physical activity by Americans of all ages is critical. Obesity, in general, costs American society well over \$100 billion a year in both direct health expenses and the indirect costs



Kids try different physical activities at VERB-sponsored events.

tied to lost economic productivity. The annual medical costs for an obese person are 37.7 percent more than the costs for someone of normal weight, according to a recent CDC-funded study. An obese recipient of Medicare, for example, costs \$1,486 more per year than a recipient at a normal weight.

But obesity is even more alarming among kids, and it's growing worse. Some 16 percent of kids ages 6 to 19 are overweight—three times the percentage since 1970. Overweight kids have a 70 percent chance of being overweight as adults.

Unlike previous generations of children who played outside all day, today's children are likelier to sit at a computer screen or in front of a television set. Parents can encourage their children to get more physically active by participating in VERB. It's an important step in fighting childhood obesity.